

# Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

## New report shows employment, earnings for graduates of Kentucky's public four-year universities

**Press Release Date:** Tuesday, August 05, 2014

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**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 5, 2014)** — A report released today from the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS) on the Commonwealth's eight public four-year universities shows that students from Kentucky were more likely to stay in the state to work than students from out-of-state. It also indicates that people who complete postgraduate degrees are less likely to remain in Kentucky to work than people with undergraduate degrees.

More than 80 percent of the Kentucky students who graduated with a bachelor's degree from one of the Commonwealth's public universities were working in Kentucky a year later, compared to less than 30 percent of the out-of-state students, according to the 2014 Kentucky Postsecondary Feedback Report.

The report provides in-depth data by institution about which degrees are pursued and the employment of graduates, as well as information about students who go on to pursue advanced degrees, average wages for various degree categories, and some insights into what happens to students who leave without a credential and do not continue their education elsewhere.

The report includes Eastern Kentucky University, Kentucky State University, Morehead State University, Murray State University, Northern Kentucky University, Western Kentucky University, the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky. It does not include associate's degrees from the Kentucky Community and Technical College System or degrees from independent colleges in Kentucky.

"This is the first report of its type in the nation that takes a deep look into what happens to our graduates after they leave college. The reports provide critical information for students and parents to help them make decisions about what they want to study," said KCEWS Executive Director Charles McGrew, Ph.D.

"Employment and earnings shouldn't be the only factor when people decide what or where to study, but given the current economic climate, it is much better to know before you choose than to be surprised after graduation," he said.

Council on Postsecondary Education President Bob King said, "This is a comprehensive report with key takeaways that can help campuses improve programs and services to students, while assisting students and families with making informed college decisions. The findings are telling us that the majority of our graduates are employed in Kentucky, confirming a solid return on the state's investment in higher education."

More than 80 percent of the students who completed an associate's degree and nearly 75 percent of those who completed a bachelor's degree from one of the public universities were identified as working in

Kentucky five years after graduation. However, about 61 percent of graduate degree earners, such as those with a master's degree or doctorate degree, were employed in Kentucky after five years. For professional degrees such as those in medicine or law, 65 percent were working in the state after five years.

"National data suggests that wages in other states are typically higher and we know people with higher levels of education on average tend to be mobile. In many ways this report tells us as much about Kentucky's economic opportunities for our college graduates as it does about the universities themselves," McGrew said.

King said that the report will also be beneficial to employers and policymakers as they gain a greater understanding of the characteristics of graduates, transfer students and those who leave college.

The report shows that students who completed an associate's or bachelor's degree in a health or science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) related field earned more in general five and 10 years after graduation than most other majors. People who receive an associate's degree in health earned more on average than people who earned bachelor's degrees in other types of fields. However, health and many STEM areas are selective admission programs and many have caps that control the number of students who can be selected.

Data from the report comes from the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System. Employment information is limited to people who work in Kentucky because it comes from the state Unemployment Insurance System.

"We estimate that the employment data covers 90 percent of the people who are employed in the state; however, we currently have no data on students who work in other states. I am confident most of the students who are not identified as working in Kentucky are still working – they are just working somewhere else," McGrew said.

In 2011-12, the total enrollment at Kentucky's eight public universities was 84,998. The combined number of students who received undergraduate and postgraduate degrees for that year was 14,289.

STEM graduates from the public research universities – which include the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville – were the most likely to continue their education from any of the public programs, with more than 28 percent moving directly into graduate school, according to the report.

"When comparing associate's degree earnings to earnings from graduates with a bachelor's degree in the same field, more education in general translates into more income, which is what most people would expect to see," said McGrew.

The report also includes a snapshot of what happens to students who leave without completing a degree or transferring to another college. The majority are found working a year later. Three fourths of the in-state students who left in 2012 were found working in Kentucky a year later.

"On average, though, their wages were close to what someone would make working full-time at minimum wage which is about \$15,000 per year. While this may seem low, this is still considerably more than high school graduates who do not attend college at all earn, so the impact of having at least some college is apparent. Still, the wages are far behind those earned by the average person who completed a degree from the same institution," McGrew said.

To view this report, visit <http://KCEWS.ky.gov>.

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*KCEWS collects and provides information about education and workforce at all levels to better inform policymaking statewide. It maintains the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System which securely links information from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB), the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, and the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. For more information, go to <http://kcews.ky.gov>.*